

*nomena*, Argento's movie has been trimmed of some of its more violent scenes — for example the chimp slashing somebody's face with a razor — and it has also been shorn of some twenty minutes of plot exposition involving the spooky *Suspiria*-like happenings at the girls' school. What's left is a brisk exercise in the horror-absurd which carries echoes of earlier Argento pics in scenes like the opening murder, where a girl has her head pushed through a window pane (as in *Suspiria*) and Connolly's underwater tussle with a decomposing corpse (a-la *Inferno*) but seems to owe more to the *Friday the 13th* genre, particularly in its nervy lakeside climax. The photography is bright and lurid, the music loud and often inappropriate. If you can suspend disbelief for Donald Pleasance's hokey Scottish accent and some extremely silly plot developments then it's all a lot of fun. But classic Argento it's not!

AB

## MY SCIENCE

**PROJECT**/Touchstone/

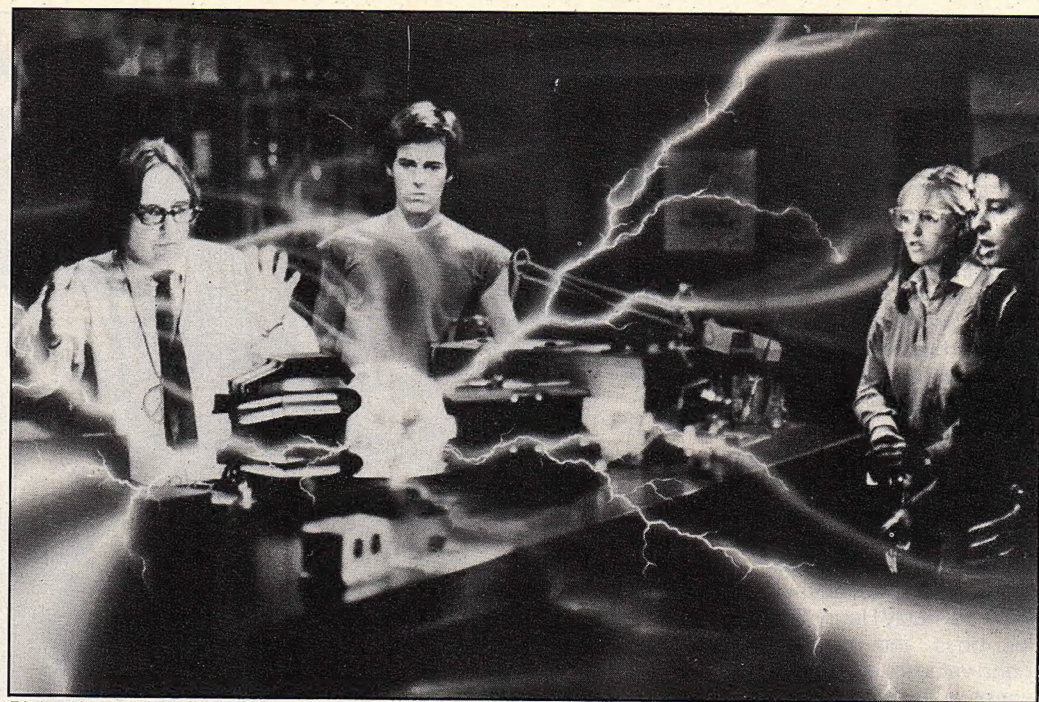
John Stockwell, Fisher

Stevens/15/91 min

★★★★

You'd think that a film that combines quality special effects with a bunch of school-kid ghostbusters would be a huge success at the US box office. Wrong. *My Science Project* opened to almost-empty cinemas in the States, was slagged off by the critics and subsequently denied a cinema release over here. Now it sheepishly emerges on video from Touchstone, Disney's adult offspring, and somewhat surprisingly turns out to be a quite enjoyable kids' film.

Michael Harlan is your typical American schoolkid — he's rich, owns a huge shiny red customized car and has a face totally devoid of acne. He's not all golden-boy though, and to make up for being almost-perfect he's a lazy, lousy student who has just two weeks in which to complete his 'science project'. In desperation he sneaks into an old disused Air Force base near his home and manages to find a strange nuclear-looking gizmo that you and I would avoid like the



Richard Dean tests the first ever nuclear powered video machine.

plague but which he thinks looks quite neat. It crackles a bit, sends off little lightning bolts and he hasn't got a clue what it does, but he needs a science project pronto so he nicks it. But when he takes it to school and lets his burned-out hippy science teacher play about with it, things start going crazy. First off the teacher disappears, then the whole town experiences a massive power cut, and then (and this is when things really go off the wall) the school is thrown into a time warp. Loads of knee high mist and dinosaurs, with a couple of spacemen and roman soldiers walking about as well. What is going on here? Why doesn't everybody just leave the school and let things sort themselves out? Ah, well you see Mike Harlan's girl is trapped in there, and they're not going until she's safe, no matter what's in there waiting for them.

Great effects, including a really fabulous dinosaur, are what this film is all about. Unfortunately it's not about a decent script, good performances or any of that vital charisma that a film like this so desperately needs. Woefully short of laughs and likeable people, it's really up to the special effects department to save the day. They almost do, and the resulting film is one that'll keep the kids happy and will entertain the less demanding audiences. Just don't expect anything in the class of *Ghostbusters*, that's all.

NB

**INVASION USA**/MGM-UA/Chuck Norris/18/96 min

★★★★

Turn on your TV, turn off your brain — sit back, and enjoy! *Invasion USA* is, I admit, the first Chuck Norris film I've ever seen: having skilfully avoided his earlier offerings the question I now ask myself is, why?

A couple of hundred nasty commies land on a Florida beach hell bent on destroying the capitalist regime. Led by the psychotic Rostov (played with manic brilliance by Richard Linch) this merry band embark on a bombing/terrorising/killing campaign of almost mythic proportions, and the only man capable of throwing a spanner — if not a dozen hand grenades — in their works is...? Chuckie Boy! A walking tank with acting abilities on a par with Cilla Black he delivers his lines with a stone-faced expression (the only one he's got?) but, who cares?! As I discovered — and I'm reliably informed that *Invasion USA* is a good example — Chuck Norris films have about as much to do with snappy dialogue, complicated plot twists and moving performances as Tom and Jerry cartoons have, but fans of this bearded bundle of fun aren't going to complain because he's got guns, and he knows how to use them...

Matt Hunter (Norris) is a tough ex-CIA gun toter with a

bad past that he'd sooner forget, but when word gets out that Rostov and his buddies are in town a half-hearted attempt is made to reinstate him. However, having found peace and happiness in his swampland paradise (yawn), Hunter just doesn't want to know, or, he doesn't want to know until... a) his shack gets blown up, b) his best mate gets fried and c) his pet armadillo develops a limp as a result of all this mayhem — thus transforming a political issue into a personal vendetta...

Finding redeeming qualities with which to recommend this movie is a hard task, but more difficult still is — how am I going to see *Delta Force* and *Missing In Action* without having to shell out for them?

SS

**THE EMERALD FOREST**/Embassy/Powers Boothe/18/109 min

★★★★

This spectacular adventure set in the depths of the Amazon carries echoes of *Deliverance* — British director John Boorman's previous journey into the savage side of man's nature. Here it's American engineer Powers (*Southern Comfort*) Boothe who makes a vividly cinematic pilgrimage into a heart of jungle darkness to try and find the son who was taken from him